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143

MORRISON

BACHALO

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NEW X-MEN

Assault On Weapon Plus

2 of 4

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ASSAULT ON WEAPON PLUS PART 2 OF 4

THE WORLD

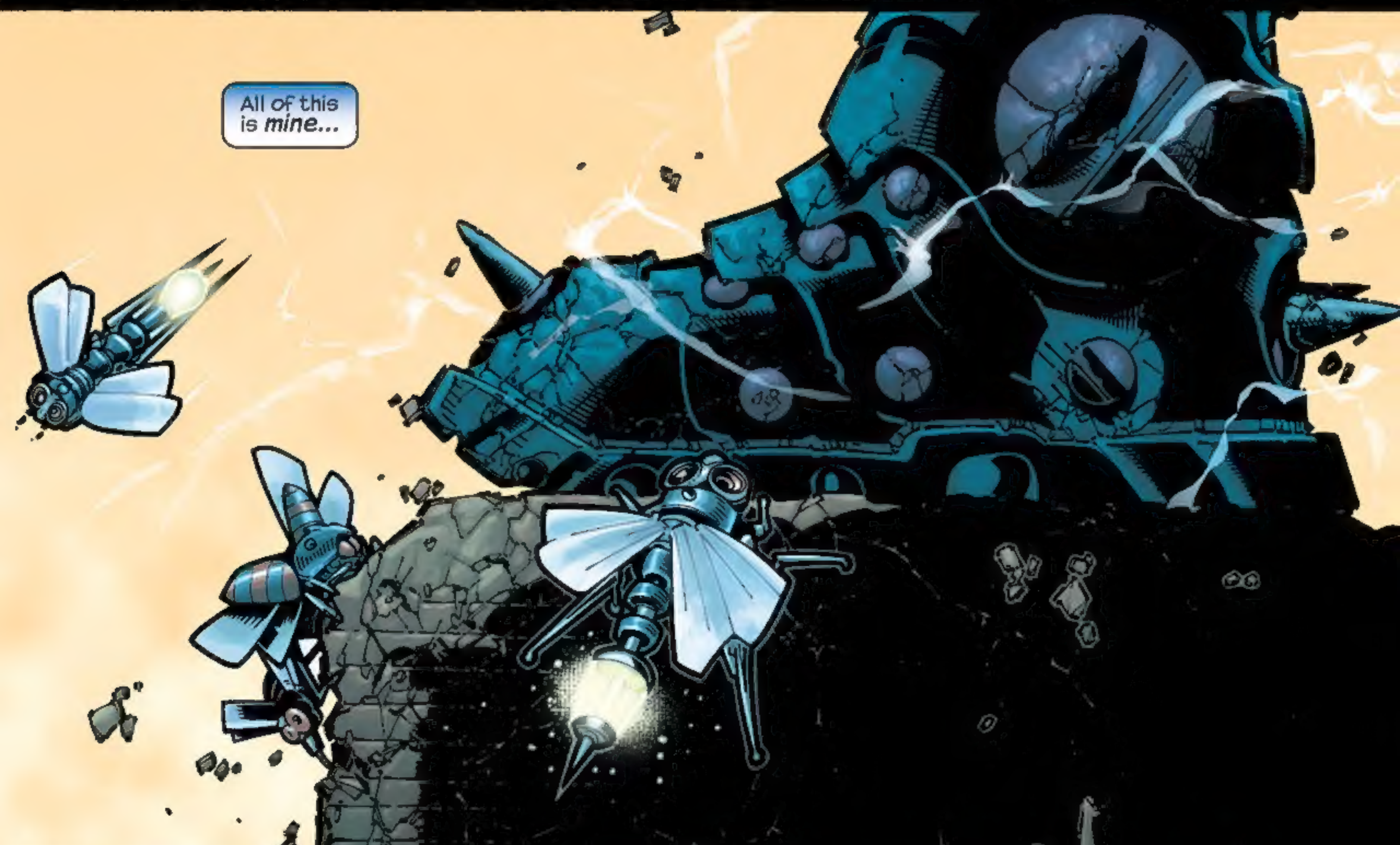
PREVIOUSLY IN NEW X-MEN...

A mysterious assassin has struck a vicious blow to the very heart of the X-Men. The group discovered the body of teammate Emma Frost shattered into a thousand diamond fragments in the very mansion erected to protect them. But who could destroy one of the world's most powerful telepaths, a woman whose secondary mutation allowed her body to become an impenetrable living diamond? And how did the murderer strike in the hallowed halls of the Xavier Institute?

Two mutant detectives, Bishop and Sage, were brought in to solve the crime. Everyone in the school was interrogated, from headmaster Professor Charles Xavier to Jean Grey, who days before had caught her husband Scott Summers having a supersensory tryst with the victim. But as the investigation proceeded, Jean cleared her name by using her seemingly limitless Phoenix powers to reincarnate Emma.

Once revived, the first name Emma screamed out was "Esme," a former pupil. With Esme implicated in the crime, the murder had apparently been solved--but a more pressing mystery has developed. During the investigation, an unseen assailant who "was at least 6′ 2″ and male" knocked Sage unconscious while she patrolled the school grounds. Esme is 5' 6" and female.

And the description matches the height of Scott Summers, who is now missing. While the rest of the team prepares to search for Scott, Wolverine — the X-Men's best tracker — has found him drowning his sorrows in strippers and whiskey in the posh Hellfire Club. But he didn't track Scott down to bring him back to the mansion... Wolverine is about to embark on a mission. He has learned several new secrets regarding his origin from the mysterious mutant-thief Fantomex, and he is prepared to investigate them immediately. Even if that means plunging into the belly of the beast itself, the source of who and what he truly is, the Weapon Plus Program. But first he needs an ally he trusts above all others. And that man is Scott Summers.



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My home, my history... *The World.*

And again the great bells of the *Euthanasium* welcoming the weak, and the strange, and the misbred of *The World* to their joyful reward.

But *"What if...?"* says the terrible voice inside.

"What if there is no joyful reward in the fire?"

Gotcha!

Welcome to *The World.*

Don't drop your *camera,* Lou -- you'll probably want it 'round about now.

Jeez. I didn't *believe* it when you told me...

...how do they *hide* this dome from the *public?*

Hide it?

This is England in the 21st century... they've been performing illegal *genetic experiments* on homeless people and runaways for *years,* but nobody wants to *know* and nobody would *believe* it or *care* if they did.

Hmm...

...they're all too busy discussing who's doing who on *"Big Brother"*...

Shall we take some incriminating *pictures,* then?

Looks like somebody's left us a *hole* in the fence...

SONY VIDEO LENS / OPTICAL 20x

Basically, the "*Euthanasium*" set-up allows us to ***fine-tune*** population levels in ***The World...***

...after splicing ***human*** genetic material with ***Sentinel*** microtechnology, we're then able to ***sculpt*** the resultant strains through high speed ***realtime*** scenarios using ***artificial evolution*** technology...

...regular ***gamma bombardments*** induce new mutations in the population and eugenic ***culls*** like this one maintain the herd at manageable levels.

Artificial evolution allows us to ***accelerate*** nature's own processes to create highly-evolved and specialized ***super-soldiers.***

You'll find it's all very ***neat*** and ***clean.***

Excuse me, ***Professor Dalton...***

...I don't want to interrupt, but there are two ***peculiar*** looking men at the perimeter fence.

Oh, I wouldn't be too concerned about a couple of unarmed media snoops...security at *The World* dome is very discreet and *efficient.*

Now how about *lunch* and I'll take you through the finer points of *man/machine fusion* techniques?

What about the two test specimens in the *Euthanasium?*

Them?

We froze *The World* just as microwave *disintegration* was beginning.

They'll burn in *eternity* together... at least until we press *restart* after lunchtime.

Like *Paolo and Francesca* in Dante's *Inferno*...

Err, yes...

Inside *The World* dome, time is *completely* under our control...that's what makes all this possible.

We can *speed* it up, *slow* it down or *freeze* it completely like *jelly*.

So is it *true*, then, that *The World's Engine* was developed from the *"Alteration Chamber"* research you took part in as a member of the *Advanced Idea Mechanics* organization...

What?

I was a student then... a misguided summer...I mean, how...

You made a pact with *A.I.M.*--we're here to collect, Professor.

Security's not *that* good, I'm afraid.

What the--?

SPLAK

UKK--! Catch me!

Thanks for the save.

Oh my God...this is *dynamite*...

...all these weird guys in *bucket helmets* are turning up with *guns*...

My bloody neck's breaking, mate!

Are you *getting* this?

Team 3 on site. The *World* is ours.

Get *time* back on in there.

System specs--can we find a *live* test subject?

Boy, am I!

Isn't that ***a specimen*** *right there in the light?*

It's not light, it's a microwave ***incinerator beam...*** *Dalton just explained it.*

So that ***thing*** *there shouldn't be...* ***climbing*** *through it, should it?*

Something's ***gone wrong!***

Something's gone--!

...a square mile of experimental *micro-reality* with its own culture, its own religion, its own *history*...a giant *petri dish* where the lives of unsuspecting human beings are *used up* in days, even *moments*.

A torture chamber.

They call it *The World*.

Here, my mother was mated with machines and I was *bred*, gentlemen.

Stay here until I need you, *E.V.A.*

I might.

Be careful, Fantomex...

Hangover, Mister Summers?

No, I just feel *stupid*, E.V.A.

I've been *pressured* into this...

Ah, shaddap, Slim.

You're sticking to the deal...

Yes, the deal still stands.

Now, who do you think cut this neat *laser hole* in the fence, *hmm?*

Snnf snff

Whadda we got *here?*

Fantomex?

Geez.

You do this, bub?

No.

A.I.M. goons... scattered *dead* all over the place...

Tell me more about this *A.I.M.*...

Advanced Idea Mechanics-- an organized group of international science-terrorists.

You know, like one of those Japanese techno-apocalypse cults?

They recruit the kinda brilliant geeks and brainy outsiders who want *revenge* for not getting any booty...

So the idea of stealing a few designer *super-soldiers* might fit the profile, *hmm*?

Goes without saying...but what messed 'em up like this?

Ribcages exploded from inside, see?

What do ya reckon?

Fantomex?

What made these educated boys suddenly run out of big ideas?

Weapon Fifteen did.

You there-- *stop!*

There he goes again...

...you should stop him from *killing* that guy, Logan.

I should stop him?

No! Stay away!

Monsieur!

A.I.M., you say?

The guy I *came* here with was a mutant rights activist but he's *dead* now...it looked at him and he just *died*...

...I'm a *journalist*... I have a family in *Baltimore*.

If you call my *girlfriend*, she'll tell you!

Leave him, Fantomex! Can't you see the guy's a *civilian*?

Hey, it's okay... I'm *Cyclops*. I've been on *TV*.

I *love* mutants. Mutants are *cool*.

I shouldn't have *come* here... my horoscope said I was to *stay home*... we'd have stayed outside if they hadn't cut the *fence*...

Calm down.

Did you *see* any of what happened?

There.

He saw *The World*.

And so did *A.I.M.*

Here's some footage.

It's struggling...

It can't handle the shock...

That's thirty mega-tranquilizer doses!

We hit the thing with five rail gun charges!

It shouldn't be struggling so...

We don't know what it can do!

Watch the hook!

It's opening its eyes... don't let it look this way!

Open fire!

Open--!

What the--?

DOWN!

Logan!

It's an *ambush!*

Tell it to that dead guy and his girlfriend in Baltimore, Slim! Come *on!*

Use yer eyebeams!

I can't...

I'm *trying* but...nothing's coming out!

I can't make it happen, Logan!

Not satisfactory.

I didn't bring you here to impress us with your chiselled features and perfect *physique*, Mister Summers. Please...

I *quit* the X-Men, Fantomex!

How many times do I have to *say* this before anyone listens?

I'm sick of the *stress!* I'm sick of the constant *drama!* I'm sick of living up to people's *expectations*...

...and I've just thrown away my *wife* and my *career* and just about *everything* that's *important* to me!

An' how many times do I hafta say this isn't an X-MEN MISSION, Slim!

We're *mercenaries* on a stress-relieving exercise, *remember?*

So let's just *terrify* these losers into submission and *move on!*

"*Terrify*" is good.

But I should point out that they appear to be using rail guns, *Monsieur* Logan.

So what's a *rail gun* and what do *I* care?

...Wolverine?

Oh God, guide my aim...

RRRRAAAAAAA

AAAAAAAAA

...I *was* just about to say it's a high-voltage electro-magnetic weapon that fires hypersonic projectiles...

There are *X-Men* here!

Hurry!

X-Men?

You should *be* so lucky.

I come in peace.

I did say "*peace*," didn't I?

I may have used the wrong word.

I-i-it didn't notice me. It didn't notice.

It can stare so hard at things they explode, but it didn't see me...

...the head was all smoke and lights and...people just...*boiled* inside...

Stop babbling.

A.I.M. helmet. Design classic. I could clean up on eBay...

But now I'm thinking...

Please, I just survived hellfire and judgment...

...I graduated magna cum laude...

Rail gun, hmm?

My heart must have stopped for about thirty seconds that time...

...would bullet holes make it more collectible or less?

Stop this.

It was the process...that's all... they had no right to keep it to themselves. A.I.M. says that's wrong but...we had nothing to do with this...

The specimen saw the outside.

When I came in they'd all just stopped yelling...it went back there...

Super-soldier ex-vee.

Weapon Fifteen.

How far have they taken it now?

INSIDE...

Time is synthetic inside *The World.*

In theory, that means we can freeze it and seal *Weapon XV* into a moment, like a mosquito in resin.

This better be *going* somewhere, Fantomex.

You were *Weapon Ten* once, Wolverine. I was *Thirteen*...

...now imagine the next generation...and the *next*...the product of rapid evolutionary engineering...

Weapon XV-- designed and perfected to *exterminate* the mutant species.

You don't have to go any *further* with this, Slim.

Everything smells... *wrong*...

You didn't bring me here for my chiselled features, Logan.

I notice Fantomex keeps holding back his "*secrets*" ...

It's "*James Logan*"...the *Weapon Plus* files give his real name as "James Logan", Mister Summers.

His healing factor made him an ideal subject for *vivisection*...and *false memory* grafts.

Welcome to *The World.*

Weapon Fifteen!

Where are you...?

TO BE CONTINUED...